

**Exhibition of Masterpieces from Private Collections  
at the Bangkok National Museum from  
6th March-6th April 1968**

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In the Journal of Archaeology Vol. 2 No. 3 I discussed the art objects of the Lopburi period displayed in the exhibition of masterpieces from private collections at the Bangkok National Museum from 6th March - 6th April 1968. Art objects of the Sukhothai period, regarded as the best period of Thai art, will now be described.

First of all is one of the most beautiful Sukhothai bronze Buddha images of Thailand (fig. 1), 92 cm. high and belonging to H.R.H. Prince Chalermpol Dighamvara. The characteristics of a typical Sukhothai Buddha image can be noted as follows: a halo in a flame-like motif, small and pointed hair-curls, an oval face, arched eyebrows, eyes that are looking downwards in a meditative way, an aquiline nose (following the Indian conception of beauty), thin lips and a gentle smiling expression. The neck is marked by three lines (also after the Indian concept of beauty) and the slender body of the Buddha has broad shoulders and a thin waist. The Buddha of this period usually wears a thin monastic robe clinging to the body and leaving the right shoulder bare. The end of the robe hanging over the left shoulder extends far down to the navel where it terminates in a knotted design. The Buddha is seated in a folded-leg fashion with the right leg over the left one and his attitude is usually that of subduing Mara viz. pointing to the ground with the beautiful and tapering fingers of the right hand, whereas the left hand remains on his lap. The border of the upper robe can be seen draped over the left wrist and thigh; the lower hem can be seen on both knees. The upper part of the lower garment can be seen at the waist and the lower hem appears as double lines on both ankles. The base for the image is usually plain without any decoration. This type of Sukhothai Buddha image is classified in the general category which is the largest, whereas the other styles consist of 3 variations. The date of this image is probably around the 14th century A.D.

There is another image in gilt bronze which also belongs to the general group of Sukhothai Buddha statues. It is 74 cm. high including a newly made pedestal and was kindly lent to the exhibition by its owner, H.R.H. Princess Chumbhot of Nagara Svarga. The characteristics of this beautiful Sukhothai Buddha image (fig.2) resemble very much those of fig.1 but the posture of the Buddha changes to that of walking which is one of the four postures which were very popular during the Sukhothai period, i.e. sitting, reclining, standing and walking. The statues of the walking Buddha in the round might be attributed to the invention of Sukhothai artists, as before this period they had been found in the Buddhist world only as high or low reliefs. Some scholars have said that the walking posture of the Sukhothai Buddha image might denote the simultaneous advance of the newly independent nation (The Thai are believed to have first created their newly independent country of Sukhothai around the middle of the 13th century A.D.). The left hand of the Buddha is raised and shows the attitude of dispelling fear which accords with his left foot in the posture of advancing. The right arm hangs down loosely near the body and the heel of the right foot which is behind is lifted up. The upper and lower garments of the Buddha are worn in the same manner as those of fig.1. This gilt bronze image probably also belongs to the 14th century A.D.

Another bronze image which also belongs to Sukhothai art displays some peculiar characteristics which might derive from the Chiengsaen school of art. This latter school flourished in the extreme northern part of Thailand and probably antedated the Sukhothai style. As can be seen in this bronze image, 41 cm. high, belonging to Pra Dulaya Ratana Potchanat (fig.3), the halo is still in a flame-like motif but the hair-curls are quite large. The face of the Buddha is rather round but the gentle smiling expression of the Sukhothai style is still apparent. The body of the Buddha is more corpulent though the monastic robe is worn more or less in the same manner as that of the Sukhothai seated Buddha image (fig.1). The upper end of the lower garment can be traced in a waving line at the waist which might suggest the influence of the Lopburi crowned Buddha. The attitude of meditation is also exceptional for Sukhothai Buddha images where the attitude of subduing Mara was always preferred. This again denotes the influence of other schools of art. The Chiengsaen influence from the north can clearly be seen in the lotus leaf designs on the pedestal. This again shows the persisting influence of the Indian Pala style in the extreme north of Thailand. The image we are considering might also be dated around the 14th century A.D. and belongs to the

Wat Takuan school of the Sukhothai style which represents a mixture of the art of Sukhothai with that of Ceylon or Chiengsaen. Some of the Buddha images of this school might form the early group of Sukhothai Buddha images.

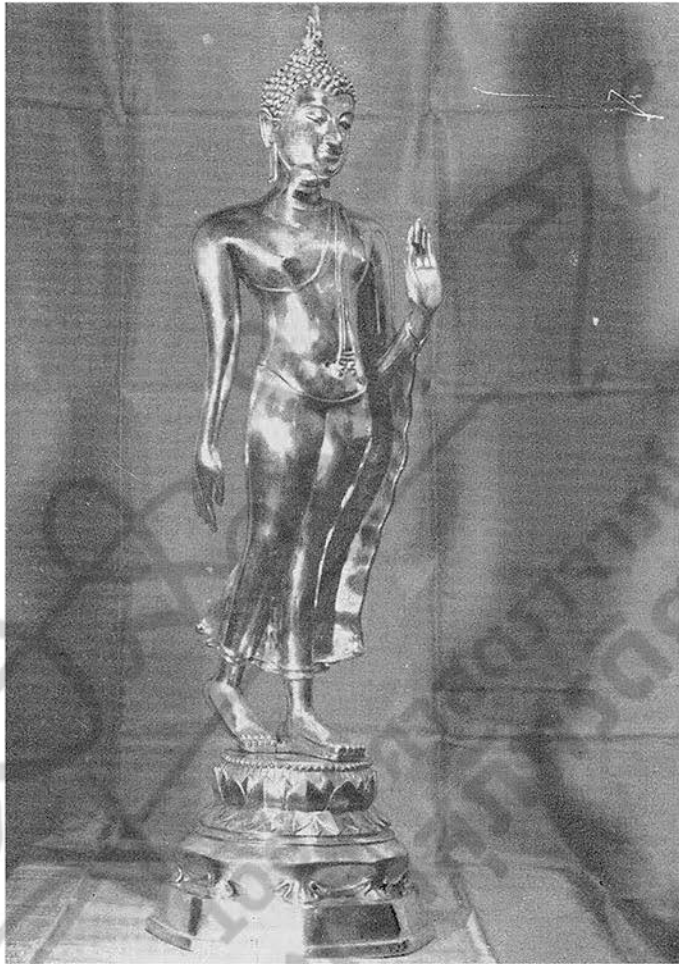
The next item is a terracotta Buddhist votive tablet, 27 cm. high, representing the walking Buddha under a niche flanked by two flower vases and protected on top by two tiers of umbrellas. This tablet, which is made from a mould, belongs to Nai Khongdej Prapatong and is quite rare as it is set in a complete plaque of terracotta rather than in that of tin or metal. This type of votive tablet is significant in that it denotes quite clearly the origin of the Sukhothai walking Buddha in the round. Near the ancient town of Sukhothai a stucco bas-relief has also been found representing the Buddha descending from Tavatimsa heaven flanked by angels and protected by two umbrellas over his head. This type of votive tablet shows a transitional period when all the angels have been removed but the two umbrellas still exist though placed one on top of the other. The next stage when the niche, flower vases and umbrellas are removed will leave only the figure of the walking Buddha which would then be cast in the round. This Buddhist votive tablet might be dated around the 14th - 15th century A.D. as some of them were still cast in metal during the early Ayudhya period.

We now come to a fine Hindu image of the Sukhothai period (fig.5). It represents Harihara, a combination of the two great Hindu gods Vishnu and Siva in one statue, and belongs to the collection of Mr. James H.W. Thompson. The image is 75 cm. high. The god wears a pointed crown of typical Thai style but the ear-rings still show the Khmer influence from Cambodia. The necklace, armlets, bracelets, belt and costume are also typically Thai. He holds a disc, a lamp (?), a bow (?) and a conch in the upper right hand, the lower right one, the lower left and the upper left hand respectively. The disc and the conch are attributes of Vishnu but the vertical third eye on the forehead and the snake decoration on the body are Siva's emblems and therefore this mixed image represents Harihara. It is not surprising that even during the Sukhothai period when the kings and the people were so piously Buddhist, Hindu images were also cast. In the old days Buddhist kings had to be Hindu at the same time or they would not know how to govern their country as various royal ceremonies pertaining to birth, coronation, death, etc., all belonged to and were performed by Hindu priests. Even to judge cases in court, a Hindu priest had to be asked for advice as the law texts were guarded by them. Even now the Thai king has Brah-



**1 Buddha subduing Mara**

Bronze. Height 92 cm. Sukhothai style. 14th century A.D.  
Lent by H.R.H. Prince Chalermpol Dighamvara.



## **2 Walking Buddha**

Gilt bronze. Height including pedestal 74 cm.

Sukhothai style. 14th century A.D.

Lent by H.R.H. Princess Chumbhot of Nagara Svarga.



**3 Buddha in meditation**

Bronze. Height 41 cm. Sukhothai style. 14th century A.D.

Lent by Pra Dulaya Ratana Potchanat.



**4 Votive tablet representing the walking Buddha**  
Terracotta, Height 27 cm. Sukhothai style. 14th–15th century A.D.  
Lent by Nai Khongdej Prapatong.



**5 Harihara**

Bronze. Height 19.5 cm. Sukhothai style. 14th century A.D.  
Lent by the collection of Mr. James H.W. Thompson.





**6 Vase**

Sangkalok ware. Height 34 cm.  
Sukhothai style. Late 13th-15th century A.D.  
Lent by Nai Lek Viriyapan.



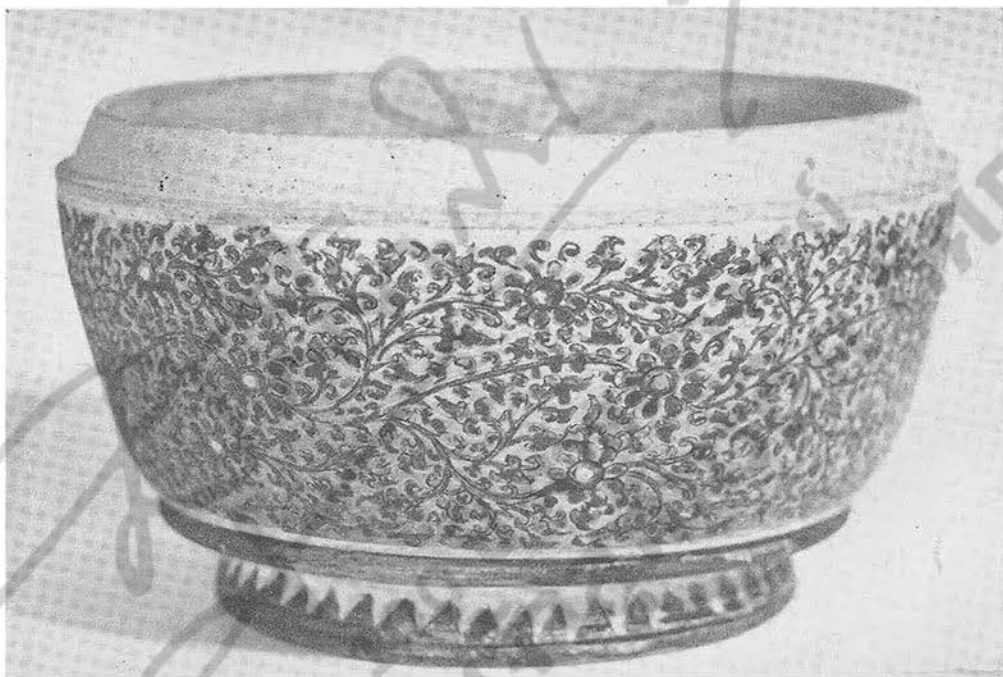
**7 Box**

Sangkolok ware. Height 12 cm. Found in Indonesia.  
Sukhothai style. Late 13th-15th century A.D.  
Lent by Mr. Floyd L. Whittington.



**8 Box**

Sangkalok ware. Height 8 cm.  
Sukhothai style. Late 13th-15th century A.D.  
Lent by Praya Buranasiripong.



**9 Box**

Sangkalok ware. Height 12 cm. Sukhothai style.  
Late 13th-15th century A.D. Lent by Praya Buranasiripong.



**10 Bowl**

Sangkalok ware. Diameter 26.5 cm.  
Sukhothai style. Late 13th-15th century A.D.  
Lent by Praya Buranasiripong.



**11 Plate**

Sangkalok ware. Diameter 42.5 cm.  
Sukhothai style. Late 13th-15th century A.D.  
Lent by Nai Prapot Paorohit.



**12 Doll**

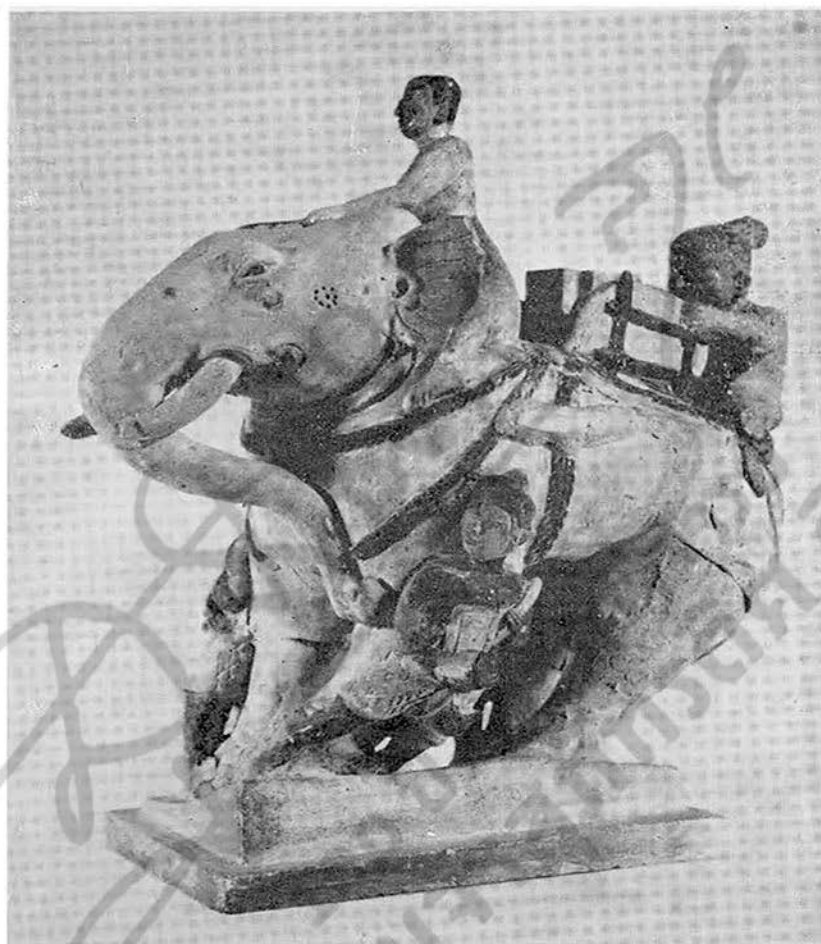
Sangkalok ware. Height 16.5 cm.  
Sukhothai style. Late 13th-15th century A.D.  
Lent by Nai Prapot Paorohit.



**13 Doll**

Sangkalok ware. Height 8 cm. Found in Indonesia.  
Sukhothai style. Late 13th-15th century A.D.  
Lent by Mr. Floyd L. Whittington.





**14 War elephant**

Sangkalok ware. Height 41 cm.  
Sukhothai style. Late 13th-15th century A.D.  
Lent by Nai Prapot Paorohit.

mins in his court to perform certain ceremonies. This image of Harihara probably belongs to the middle group of Sukhothai bronze Hindu images and therefore its date is again presumably around the 14th century A.D.

During the Sukhothai period, one of their chief exports was ceramics. The Sukhothai potters probably learned the ceramic techniques from their Chinese teachers. They later produced their own ceramics and exported them as far as Japan, Indonesia, the Philippines and Borneo. In these countries a lot of Sukhothai ware (called Sangkalok in Thai) has been discovered and most of it is far better than those found in Thailand. They were kept and treasured by the Japanese and Indonesians. For this exhibition of masterpieces from private collections at the Bangkok National Museum from the 6th March - 6th April 1968, several remarkable pieces were borrowed from the notable collections of Nai Lek Vuriyapan (fig.6), Mr. Floyd L. Whittington (figs. 7,13), Praya Buranasiripong (figs. 8-10) and Nai Prapot Paorobit (figs. 11-12, 14). Most of these ceramic objects came from kilns near the town of Sisatchanalai, the twin city of Sukhothai. They are painted or incised and then covered by a beautiful glaze. Not only were vases, boxes, bowls and plates produced but also human figurines and war-elephants. Those lent by Mr. Floyd L. Whittington (figs. 7,13) were recently acquired in Indonesia.

(to be continued)

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